

The Glasgow School of Art

GSA Guide to Safe Use of Ladders and Low Level Access Equipment

January 2019

Policy Control

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Benchmarking	Edinburgh College of Art, Golden Rules +. Edinburgh College of Art, The ECA guide to safe working at height. The University of Manchester, Working at Height. University of St Andrews, Ladders - Use, Storage and Maintenance (GUIDANCE). Health and Safety Executive, The Safe use of ladders and stepladders.

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1. Introduction

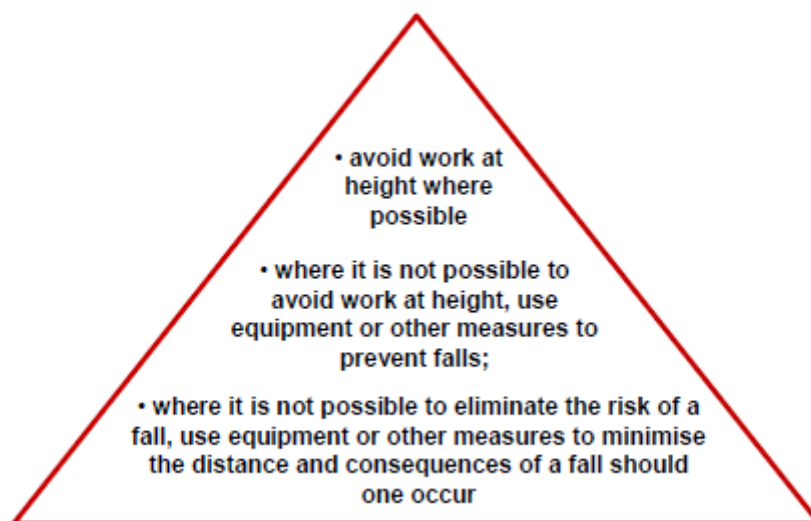
The law states that every employer shall ensure that a ladder is used for work at height only if a risk assessment has demonstrated that the use of more suitable work equipment is not justified because of the low risk, the short duration of use, or existing features on site cannot be altered.

This guidance is to assist staff and students in taking simple, sensible precautions, ensuring safety when using ladders and low level access equipment in the workplace. It aims to protect the Health and Safety of all students and staff, ensuring that all GSA practices are inclusive and accessible. Any student/staff requiring additional support should speak to their programme leader/line manager in the first instance.

2. Requirements of the Regulations

The Work at Height Regulations require that “every employer shall take suitable and sufficient action to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury”.

The risk control hierarchy diagram below sets out the three principle measures, the first being avoiding working at height, that staff and students should apply in order to prevent injuries occurring that arise from falls from height:



There are a number of ways in which a task can be planned to minimise the risk, practical examples include:

- Creating artwork at ground level, and then lifting the finished work into its vertical position on completion (e.g. large sculptures)
- Constructing any artwork in sections at ground level, limiting the time spent working at height only to the assemble of the artwork
- Using extendable tools from ground level to remove the need to climb a ladder
- Using floor space or low tables to display work instead of hanging on a wall

3. Using the right equipment



If it is identified that the use of ladders or low level access equipment is required, careful thought should be given to selecting the appropriate equipment. When selecting equipment for work at height, please consider the following factors:

- The height in which the task is required to take place
- The actual task (does it involve lifting, moving, the use of tools or equipment)
- How long will the activity last (i.e. how long will you be working at height)
- The number of people at risk
- The floor/surface conditions
- Other hazards in the work area such as cabling
- Other fall risks such as balconies or windows etc


Please be aware, chairs and tables are **NOT** appropriate equipment for working at height, these should not be used, even for a short period of time.

4. Types of Equipment

The following table illustrates some examples of equipment suitable for accessing low levels which could be used within GSA premises.

Type	When to Use	Any Consideration
<p data-bbox="256 427 395 456">Step- Stool</p> 	<p data-bbox="528 427 981 577">Step-stools should only be used for very short periods of time – for example – to place an item on a shelf within reach.</p>	<p data-bbox="1007 427 1422 488">Considerations when using a step-stool:</p> <ul data-bbox="1007 501 1449 891" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1007 501 1337 562">• Observe manufacturer’s instructions <li data-bbox="1007 573 1449 712">• If anything becomes unclear, you should seek advice from your line manager and/or tutor/programme leader <li data-bbox="1007 723 1449 824">• The step should be moved into a new position if required, rather than risking overreaching <li data-bbox="1007 835 1422 891">• Don't carry items in both hands when mounting
<p data-bbox="220 936 432 965">Hop Up Platform</p> 	<p data-bbox="528 936 922 1070">Low-level hop up platforms are intended for low-level access requirements (often used for plastering or decorating trades).</p>	<p data-bbox="1007 936 1449 996">Considerations when using a hop up platform:</p> <ul data-bbox="1007 1010 1449 1576" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1007 1010 1449 1294">• Should not be used if the rubber on the bottom is damaged as this increases the risk that the equipment could move when in use. Equipment should not be used if the rubber is damaged to the extent where it might compromise this facility <li data-bbox="1007 1305 1337 1366">• Observe manufacturer’s instructions <li data-bbox="1007 1377 1417 1473">• Ensure that shoes that will not slip on the stools surfaces are worn <li data-bbox="1007 1485 1449 1576">• The platform should be moved into a new position if required, rather than risking overreaching

<p>Podium Steps</p> 	<p>Podiums platforms may be appropriate for those hanging work on walls, or where carrying out tasks such as painting or sculpture, where there is a need for high levels of focus and concentration which may present risks whilst working on a traditional step ladder.</p>	<p>Considerations when using Podium Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only to be used following a suitable risk assessment, and discussions with line manager or tutor/programme leader • Only to be erected by trained persons • Observe manufacturer's instructions • Never move the platform whilst persons are still on it • Ensure ground conditions are suitable – flat, level and firm • Lock castor wheels before use (if fitted) • Ensure all components are in place and remain in place throughout use. • Avoid overloading the platform with tools or materials • Make sure the gate (if fitted) is closed whilst in use • Tools and materials should be put onto a podium at ground level where possible
<p>Step Ladder</p> 	<p>A stepladder is a self-supporting ladder providing swift access to low risk and short duration work. Generally, no more than 30 minutes.</p>	<p>Considerations when using a step ladder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out a pre-check inspection checklist* • Only use a step ladder in good condition, and on flat level ground • Do not work above the 3rd step from the top (leave 3 clear steps) • Maintain 3 points of contact • Work 'head on' rather than at right angles • Do not over reach sideways • If you don't feel comfortable/safe - come down immediately • Be aware of other risks –ground conditions, overhead lighting etc • Never straddle the top of a stepladder <p>* Please see appendix 1 for Ladder Pre-Use Inspection Checklist</p>

<p>Leaning Ladders</p> 	<p>Leaning ladders are classified for type of use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EN 131 is for trade and light industrial use. Generally, work within GSA would require this standard. • BS2037/BS1129 Class 1 for heavy duty and industrial use • BS2037/BS1129 Class 3 is for domestic use. 	<p>Considerations when using a leaning ladder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out a pre-check inspection checklist* • Don't overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles • Make sure it is long enough or high enough for the task • Don't overload it – consider workers' weight and the equipment or materials • Make sure the ladder angle is at 75° • Always grip the ladder and face the ladder rungs while climbing or descending • Don't try to move or extend ladders while standing on the rungs • Don't work off the top three rungs • Don't stand ladders on moveable objects (such as pallets) • Maintain three points of contact when climbing (this means a hand and two feet) and wherever possible at the work position • A leaning ladder must be secured to prevent it from slipping either outwards or sideways and should not be rested against weak upper surfaces <p>*Please see appendix 1 for Ladder Pre-Use Inspection Checklist</p>
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5. Pre-Use Check

Anyone using a GSA ladder for work at height should carry out a visual pre-inspection before starting the task to spot any obvious defects and ensure equipment is safe to use. The pre-use check should be carried out:

- By the user
- At the beginning of the working day
- After something has changed (e.g. if the ladder is moved to a different location)

Please see appendix 1 for Ladder Pre-Use Inspection Checklist which will assist in carrying out visual pre-inspections.

6. Storing and Maintaining Equipment

Equipment should be stored appropriately after use to ensure it doesn't get damaged. All types of ladders should be stored horizontally on racks with an adequate number of support points. Equipment should not be stored near heat sources, in damp conditions, in direct sunlight or in any other condition that could damage the ladder.

7. Unsuitable Equipment

Staff and students should be made aware that personal ladders (e.g. brought in from home) are not appropriate for working at height in the workplace. Any non GSA procured equipment must be removed from site, disposed of or secured out of use until removed.

If personal ladders are intended to be used for other purposes (e.g. during a performance or integrated into a larger structure) an assessment of their strength and condition should be carried out with a member of staff before use.

8. Further Reading

For further information, you should refer to GSA guidance, which can be accessed on the GSA webpage here: <http://www.gsa.ac.uk/about-gsa/key-information/occupational-health-and-safety/>

Specific GSA guidance that may be of help include the following:

- GSA Health and Safety Risk Assessment Procedure

Here are some **HSE** documents which may also give further guidance:

- Using leaning ladders safely - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/leaning-ladders.htm>
- Using stepladders safely: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/stepladders.htm>
- Working at height - A brief guide: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>
- Safe use of ladders and stepladders: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf>

Appendix 1

Ladder Pre-Use Inspection Checklist

A visual pre-use inspection is required for all types of ladders, every time the ladder is used. The following aide memoire can be used when completing visual checks.

	Inspection Item	✓/x
1	Is the ladder free from any modification, such as being painted, shortened etc	
2	Are the stiles (upright) free from damage or excessive wear	
3	Are the rungs (steps) clean and free of damage or excessive wear	
4	Are all the rungs (steps) and fittings in place (e.g. slip resistant feet on metal ladders)	
5	Are the rungs and stiles secure and free from movement	
6	Are all tie rods in place and secure	
7	Is the ladder free from distortion or warping that could affect its stability	
8	Is the ladder free from damage such as cracks, corrosion or dents etc	
9	Are all fittings such as ropes, pulleys or hinges free from wear or damage	
10	Is it correctly positioned (1 out of every 4 up; approx. 75° pitch)	
12	Is it positioned on a level and firm surface	
13	Is it correctly footed and/or secured (tied off) to prevent it slipping or moving	
14	Does it extend 1.05m (3.5ft) above the platform it is being used to access or is an alternative handhold provided on the landing surface	
	For Step Ladders, also check the following:	
15	Are stiles, steps and top platform secure, clean, dry and free from damage or excessive wear	
16	Are any rubber/plastic non slip feet in place, firmly attached and in good condition	
17	Are any locking devices in place and in working order and secure when the step ladder is extended	
18	Has the ladder/step ladder passed inspection, is fit for use	

Ladders which have failed inspection should be disposed of in a manner such that it cannot be re-used. If this is the case, remove the ladder from service **immediately**, tag it with a **DO NOT USE** sign, and report it to the Estates Department.

Any Action Required